

In memorium: Dr. Satyesh Chandra Pakrashi (1930–2019)

Received: 10 March 2019 / Accepted: 11 March 2019
© Archana Sharma Foundation of Calcutta 2019

Dr. Satyesh Chandra Pakrashi, FNA, FNASc, FASc-T, the 2nd President of Archana Sharma Foundation of Calcutta, Kolkata, India left for his heavenly abode on the 26th of January, 2019.

He was born in February, 1930 in a well known Zaminder family of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. He did his matriculation from his family school in 1944 and obtained his MSc. degree from the University of Calcutta in the year 1950. He was awarded Ph.D. degree in Chemistry in the year 1954 under the guidance of eminent scientist Professor (Mrs.) Asima Chatterjee at the University of Calcutta. His work on the structure elucidation of the *Rauwolfia* alkaloid—yohimbine (alternative form of Rauwolscine) is the basis of the stereo-chemical assignment of the well known tranquillizing drug, reserpine was widely acclaimed.

He then proceeded to USA for postdoctoral research and joined the laboratory of Professor Carl Djerassi at Wayne State University, Detroit in 1955. He made significant contributions on *Rauwolfia* alkaloids, also collaborated with Dr. R.B. Woodward, at the Harvard University, to work on the structures of tetraphyllicin, ajmalidine and rauvomycin. In 1956, he moved to the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York to work with Professor D.S. Tarbell. He synthesized C^{14} incorporated Benz [α] pyrene, a well-known carcinogen, and studied the application of its metabolites on mouse skin.

During his long course of research career, he worked as a visiting Scientist with Professor K Biemann, at MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA in the year 1973. He also collaborated with many other renowned scientists of USA, Germany and Japan.

After returning to India he joined Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (IICB), Kolkata on a first ever US Public Health Research Project (1959–63) and then joined as Senior Scientist in 1963. He served as the Director, IICB, Kolkata during the period 1985 to 1990, and was reappointed as CSIR Distinguished Fellow till 1995. He was also conferred the D.Sc. (*honoris causa*) by Kanpur University (1996). His academic, research achievements and

outstanding contributions in the chemistry of natural products, particularly alkaloids and terpenoids had earned him honors and awards.



Dr. Pakrashi was a recipient of the Basudev Memorial Award of Indian Chemical Society, Kolkata (1967) and the Raj Kristo Dutt Memorial Award of Indian Science Congress Association, Kolkata (2006). He was an elected Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy (FNA), 1984; Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences India (FNASc.), 1995. He was Trustee (1975–87), Council Member (1969–74) and Vice President (1974) of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Kolkata, Executive Council, Indian Chemical Society, Kolkata (1970–73, 1976–79) and was the Founder Vice President (1986–93) and later President (1997–2000) of the West Bengal Academy of Science and Technology, Kolkata. He was President, International Federation of Associations for Advancement of Science and Technology (1996–98) and General President, Indian

Science Congress Association, Kolkata (1994–95). He was also the Founder President of two other Societies (Foundations) namely, Professor Asima Chatterjee Foundation of Kolkata (PSCFK, Founded in 2014) and Professor B. M. Barua Foundation (Founded in 2015) respectively.

Dr. Pakrashi played a pivotal role in the development of Indian Institute of Chemical Biology. He created and developed the Department of Medicinal Chemistry at IICB. He co-edited the six-volumes of *The Treaties on Indian Medicinal Plants* and several other monographs. He was the Assistant Editor, *Annals of Biochemistry and Experimental Medicine* (1961–63), now known as *Indian Journal of Biochemistry and Biophysics* and Member, Editorial Committee of *Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Abstracts*. He served on the INSA Council (1988–91; 1995) and was Member of the Governing Body and Academic Council the AIIMS, New Delhi (1989–93).

He pioneered in India the application of physical methods, particularly mass spectrometry, for the structure elucidation of minor alkaloids. He published nearly 180 research papers besides a dozen patents, a score of review articles and book chapters. He was also Extramural Honorary Teacher in the Department of Biochemistry, Calcutta University (1966–2001) and National Lecturer, UGC (1985). He mentored a large number of students including about 20 Ph.D. students.

Dr. Pakrashi was not only an eminent scientist but also an able administrator. Above all he was a true gentleman and good human being, a man of great wit and humour.

Words are not enough to show our gratitude to Dr. Pakrashi for his contribution to the Archana Sharma Foundation of Calcutta (ASFC), Kolkata, India in the hour of crisis when Professor A.K. Sharma, Founder President of ASFC passed away in July 2017. As a well-wisher of the foundation, a close friend of Professor A. K. Sharma and Professor (Mrs.) A. Sharma he accepted our request to be the President of the Foundation in spite of his ill health. He was always with us as a guiding star with his wise suggestions in all aspects of the foundation affairs whether it was administrative or matters related to the growth of the journal, *The Nucleus*. He never shunned his responsibilities and attended all the meetings without fail even when he was not in good health. His advice and guidance subsequently have helped the society to overcome many of its shortcomings. The Foundation will remember Dr. Pakrashi forever for his contribution to the welfare of the Society.

Anita Mukherjee¹, Bani Gajra¹
gajrabani@gmail.com

¹Archana Sharma Foundation of Calcutta, Kolkata, India

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.